

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO CINCPAC

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 115952 ACTION BANGKOK 18 MAY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: NOTE TO THAI GOVERNMENT RE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF NOTE YOU SHOULD TRANSMIT TO THE
THAI GOVERNMENT ADDING THE USUAL FORMAL INTRODUCTORY
AND CLOSING PHRASES:

THE UNITED STATES REGRETS THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS THAT
HAVE ARISEN BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES IN
REGARD TO THE TEMPORARY PLACEMENT OF MARINES AT UTAPAO
TO ASSIST IN THE RECOVERY OF THE SS MAYAGUEZ. THERE
IS A LONG TRADITION OF CLOSE AND WARM RELATIONS BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND THAILAND, A TRADITION WHICH HAS
HELPED OUR TWO COUNTRIES FACE MANY DIFFICULT PERIODS
TOGETHER.

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TO INFORM THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT OF THE FACTS
SURROUNDING THE SEIZURE AND RECOVERY OF THE MAYAGUEZ,
THERE IS ENCLOSED AN ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT DRAWN
SUBSTANTIALLY FROM THE REPORT PRESIDENT FORD SUBMITTED
TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS ON MAY 15. AS THIS

ETEEMONSTRATES, SPEED OF ACTION ESSENTIAL.
THE ACTIONS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF THE NEW

CAMBODIAN REGIME INDICATED TO US THAT ANY DELAY IN
RECOVERING THE SHIP AND RESCUING THE CREW COULD HAVE
HAD THE MOST SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

IT IS CLEAR THAT BY ITS ACTION THE UNITED STATES WAS
ABLE TO COUNTER A COMMON DANGER TO ALL NATIONS AND
TO THE WORLD'S OCEAN COMMERCE PRESENTED BY THIS ILLEGAL
AND UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE WITH INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING
ROUTES IN THE GULF OF THAILAND.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS
UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM CAUSED THE ROYAL THAI
GOVERNMENT BY THESE PROCEDURES AND WISHES TO REPEAT
ITS REGRET. THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES CONTINUES
TO BE ONE OF RESPECTING THE SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE
OF THAILAND. THE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HAVE LED
TO THE RECENT TURN OF EVENTS DO NOT ALTER THIS
TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP, AND ARE NOT GOING TO BE REPEATED;
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES LOOKS FORWARD TO
WORKING IN HARMONY AND FRIENDSHIP WITH THE ROYAL THAI
GOVERNMENT.

BEGIN ACCOUNT OF INCIDENT ENCLOSURE:

ON MAY 12, 1975, THE MAYAGUEZ WAS FIRED UPON, STOPPED,
BOARDED, AND SEIZED BY NAVAL PATROL BOATS OF THE ARMED
FORCES OF CAMBODIA IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS IN THE
VICINITY OF POULO WAI. THE SEIZED VESSEL WAS THEN
FORCED TO PROCEED TO KOH TANG WHERE IT WAS REQUIRED TO
ANCHOR. THIS HOSTILE ACT WAS IN CLEAR VIOLATION OF
INTERNATIONAL LAW.

IN VIEW OF THIS ILLEGAL AND DANGEROUS ACT, UNITED
STATES MILITARY FORCES WERE ORDERED TO PROCEED TO
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THE AREA, TO CONDUCT THE NECESSARY RECONNAISSANCE,
AND TO BE READY TO RESPOND IF DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO
SECURE THE RETURN OF THE VESSEL AND ITS PERSONNEL
WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL. APPROPRIATE DEMANDS FOR THE
RETURN OF THE MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW WERE MADE, BOTH
PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, WITHOUT SUCCESS.

AT ABOUT 6:20 A.M. ON MAY 13, PURSUANT TO INSTRUCTIONS
TO PREVENT THE MOVEMENT OF THE MAYAGUEZ INTO A

MAINLAND PORT. U.S. AIRCRAFT FIRED WARNING SHOTS ACROSS
THE BOW OF THE SHIP AND GAVE VISUAL SIGNALS TO SMALL
CRAFT APPROACHING THE SHIP. SUBSEQUENTLY, IN ORDER TO
STABILIZE THE SITUATION AND IN AN ATTEMPT TO PRECLUDE

REMOVAL OF THE CREW OF THE MAYAGUEZ TO THE MAINLAND, WHERE THEIR RESCUE WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT, THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES WERE DIRECTED TO ISOLATE THE ISLAND AND THE MAINLAND, AND TO PREVENT MOVEMENT OF THE SHIP ITSELF, WHILE STILL TAKING ALL POSSIBLE CARE TO PREVENT LOSS OF LIFE OR INJURY TO THE CAPTIVE CREW. DURING THE EVENING OF MAY 13, A CAMBODIAN PATROL BOAT ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE THE ISLAND DISREGARDED AIRCRAFT WARNINGS AND WAS SUNK. THEREAFTER, TWO OTHER CAMBODIAN PATROL CRAFT WERE DESTROYED AND FOUR OTHERS WERE DAMAGED AND IMMOBILIZED. ONE BOAT, SUSPECTED OF HAVING SOME OF THE CAPTIVE CREW ABOARD, SUCCEEDED IN REACHING KOMPONG SOM AFTER EFFORTS TO TURN IT AROUND WITHOUT INJURY TO THE PASSENGERS FAILED.

OUR CONTINUED OBJECTIVE IN THIS OPERATION WAS THE RESCUE OF THE CAPTURED CREW ALONG WITH THE RETAKING OF THE SHIP MAYAGUEZ. FOR THAT PURPOSE, LATE ON THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 14 AN ASSAULT BY UNITED STATES MARINES WAS ORDERED ON KOH TANG TO SEARCH OUT AND RESCUE SUCH CREW-MEMBERS AS MIGHT STILL BE THERE, AND THE RETAKING OF THE MAYAGUEZ WAS ASSIGNED TO OTHER MARINES BOARDING FROM THE DESTROYER ESCORT USS HOLT. IN ADDITION TO CONTINUED FIGHTER AND GUNSHIP COVERAGE OF THE KOH TANG AREA, THESE MARINE ACTIVITIES WERE SUPPORTED BY TACTICAL AIRCRAFT FROM THE USS CORAL SEA, STRIKING THE MILITARY AIRFIELD AT REAM AND OTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILITARY TARGETS IN THE KAMPONG SOM AREA IN ORDER TO PREVENT REINFORCEMENT OR SUPPORT FROM THE MAINLAND FOR THE CAMBODIAN FORCES DETAINING THE VESSEL AND ITS CREW.

AT APPROXIMATELY 8:00 A.M. LOCAL TIME ON MAY 15, THE MAYAGUEZ WAS RETAKEN BY UNITED STATES FORCES. AT APPROXIMATELY 10:30 A.M. THE ENTIRE CREW OF THE MAYAGUEZ WAS TAKEN ABOARD THE USS WILSON FROM A THAI FISHING BOAT WHICH, TOGETHER WITH ITS THAI CREW, WAS ALSO BEING HELD BY CAMBODIAN FORCES. THE UNITED STATES MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE AREA HAD APPARENTLY PROMPTED THE CAMBODIANS TO RELEASE THEIR THAI AND AMERICAN CAPTIVES AND PERMIT THEM TO SAIL OUT TO THE

AMERICAN WARSHIP. AFTER THE MAYAGUEZ CREW MEMBERS HAD BOARDED THE WILSON, THE FIVE THAI FISHERMEN REQUESTED FOOD AND FUEL SO THAT THEY MIGHT CONTINUE ON THEIR WAY. THE WILSON COMPLIED WITH THEIR REQUEST. AFTER TRANSFERRING THE MAYAGUEZ CREW BACK TO THEIR VESSEL, WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY GOT UP STEAM AND LEFT KOH TANG, THE UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE AREA BEGAN A

PROCESS OF DISENGAGEMENT AND WITHDRAWAL.

END ENCLOSURE ROBINSON

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